D-591

Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church

Architectural Survey File

This is the architectural survey file for this MIHP record. The survey file is organized reverse-chronological (that is, with the latest material on top). It contains all MIHP inventory forms, National Register nomination forms, determinations of eligibility (DOE) forms, and accompanying documentation such as photographs and maps.

Users should be aware that additional undigitized material about this property may be found in on-site architectural reports, copies of HABS/HAER or other documentation, drawings, and the "vertical files" at the MHT Library in Crownsville. The vertical files may include newspaper clippings, field notes, draft versions of forms and architectural reports, photographs, maps, and drawings. Researchers who need a thorough understanding of this property should plan to visit the MHT Library as part of their research project; look at the MHT web site (mht.maryland.gov) for details about how to make an appointment.

All material is property of the Maryland Historical Trust.

Last Updated: 01-31-2013

D-591 Bethel A. M. E. Church Cambridge Founded c. 1847, 1903 Public Worship

The Bethel A.M.E. Church is clearly one of the most significant landmarks of African-American history and development in Dorchester County. Second to the Waugh Chapel Methodist congregation established in 1826, the Bethel A.M.E. membership was begun around 1847, which was when a fledgling group of members purchased property bordering Pine Street. The present building, the third to house this congregation, is a well detailed Gothic Revival brick edifice dominated by asymmetrical towers. Three pointed arch window and door openings, enhanced with corbelled brick heads, mark the first floor front. A marble datestone documents the construction of this structure in 1903. Since the Waugh congregation replaced its Victorian church in the late twentieth century, this is the oldest African-American church structure in the city of Cambridge, and its active congregation remains a vital part of the community.

On the 23rd of December 1847, Dr. Thomas H. Handy and his wife Sarah conveyed a parcel of land measuring 98' across by 200' deep to a group of free black residents of Cambridge for \$125. Named first as one of the grantees was the congregation's evident first minister Simon Brown, and the other trustees named in the conveyance included Spencer Young, Washington Jolly, Henry Washington, Joseph Brown, William Banks, William Hill, Chamberlain Bowley, and Joseph Marine. Evidently the young congregation worshipped across the street since the lot on the west side was mortgaged to William Dail, a former sheriff, in exchange for use of a building

on the east side of Pine. As the African-American population in the county seat increased, so did the congregation's ability to rebuild, first in 1870 and a second time with this ambitious common bond brick structure in 1903.

Inventory No. D-591

Maryland Historical Trust Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

historic	Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church									
other	8						28 18			
2. Location				1)						
street and number	623 Pi	ne Street		**					not for	oublication
city, town	Cambi	ridge							vicinity	
county	Dorchester									
3. Owner of Pr	operty	(give names	s and mai	ling addre	sses of all	owners)				
name	Trustee	es of Bethel	A.M.E.	Church				ñ		
street and number	623 Pin	e Street				teler	ohone	4	10-	
city, town	Cambr	ridge		state	MD		zi	code	21613	}
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7. Description

Inventory No. D-591

Condition

X	_ excellent	deteriorated
	_ good	ruins
	_ fair	altered

Prepare both a one paragraph summary and a comprehensive description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

DESCRIPTION SUMMARY

The Bethel A.M.E. Church, built in 1903, is a large nine-course common bond brick church that stands at 623 Pine Street on the northwest corner of the intersection of Pine and Bethel streets in Cambridge, Dorchester County, Maryland. The asymmetrically designed Victorian church faces east with the gable roof oriented on an east/west axis. The steeply pitched roof is covered with asphalt shingles. The sanctuary interior survives with much of its original period fabric. Attached to the back of the church is a two-story Sunday School and administrative wing that dates to the mid twentieth century.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Bethel A. M. E. Church is a large nine-course common bond brick structure that stands at 623 Pine Street in the center of the Pine Street Neighborhood Historic District in Cambridge, Dorchester County, Maryland. Built in 1903, the three-bay by five-bay brick church faces east with its gable roof oriented on an east/west axis. An asymmetrical façade of uneven corner towers flank a center bay topped by a three-sided parapet wall. Fixed in the corner of the northeast corner of the north tower is a marble datestone inscribed, "Union Bethel A. M. E. Church, Built 1870, Rebuilt 1903." Attached to the back of the church is a mid twentieth century Sunday School and administrative wing erected in frame and concrete block.

The east (main) facade is an asymmetrical three-bay elevation with uneven towers on each of the outer corners. The southeast tower rises the equivalent of four stories with the corner defined by buttresses. The east face of the first story is pierced by a large pointed arch window and door combination with a corbelled brickwork accenting the point of the colored glass window, which is fixed directly above a single width door opening. Piercing the tower wall surface above the doorway is a lobed triangular shaped window fitted with a tripartite pattern of repeating lobed crosses. The top two sides of the triangular opening are accented with raised brickwork while the bottom side is finished with a brick rowlock sill. The uppermost surface of the tower is pierced by a round vent framed by a brick rowlock border. The top few courses of brickwork of the southeast tower have been rebuilt with a mid twentieth century brick. The center bay is recessed back from the front plane of the tower, and centered in the wall surface is a large double-door opening topped by a large pointed arch colored glass window. The top two sides of the Gothic arched window are edged in corbelled brickwork. The window opening is fitted with a circular pattern infilled with a four-part pattern of tripartite lobed forms. Fixed above the combination door and window is a round window opening with a raised brickwork highlighting the top half of the circular window. The northeast tower is the equivlant of three stories with a single width door opening and colored glass window fitted within a Gothic arched opening. The same corbelled brickwork frames the top curved sides of the pointed arch window. The upper level of the tower is pierced by a round window as well, and its top half is

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Name Bethel A. M. E. Church Continuation Sheet

Number 7 Page 1

edged with raised brickwork. The outside corners of the northeast tower, like the southeast tower, are trimmed with corner buttresses. The top edge of the squared off tower is finished with decorative corbelled brickwork that stretches across the crest of the wall between the buttresses.

The north and south side elevations are largely alike with each façade divided into five bays by protruding brick columns that terminate under the extended eave. Each bay is pierced by a Gothic arched window filled with colored glass, and the window heads are trimmed with raised brickwork.

Period	Areas of Significance	Check and	justify below	3 par 1
1600-1699 1700-1799 1800-1899 x 1900-1999 2000-	agriculture archeology architecture art commerce communications community planning conservation	economics education engineering entertainment/ recreation ethnic heritage exploration/ settlement	health/medicine industry invention landscape architecture law literature maritime history military	performing arts philosophy politics/government religion science social history x_ transportation other:
Specific dates	Establishe	ed c. 1847	Architect/Builder	
Construction da	ates 1870, 190	3		
Evaluation for:				
	National Register		Maryland Register	xnot evaluated

Prepare a one-paragraph summary statement of significance addressing applicable criteria, followed by a narrative discussion of the history of the resource and its context. (For compliance projects, complete evaluation on a DOE Form – see manual.)

SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY

The Bethel A.M.E. Church is clearly one of the most significant landmarks of African-American history and development in Dorchester County. Second to the Waugh Chapel Methodist congregation established in 1826, the Bethel A.M.E. membership is thought to have formed around 1847 with the purchase of property bordering Pine Street. The present building, the third to define this location, is an well detailed Gothic Revival brick edifice dominated by asymmetrical towers the three pointed arch window and door openings by decorative corbelled brickwork. A marble datestone documents the construction of this structure to 1903. Since the Waugh congregation replaced its Victorian church in the late twentieth century, this is the oldest African-American church structure in the city of Cambridge, and its active congregation remains a vital part of the community.

HISTORY AND SUPPORT

On the 23rd of December 1847, Dr. Thomas H. Handy and his wife Sarah conveyed a parcel of land measuring 98' across by 200' deep to a group of free black residents of Cambridge for \$125.¹ Named first in the transaction was the congregation's early minister Simon Brown, and the other trustees named in the conveyance included Spencer Young, Washington Jolly, Henry Washington, Joseph Brown William Banks, William Hill, Chamberlain Bowley, and Joseph Marine. Evidently the young congregation worshipped across the street since the lot on the west side was mortgaged to William Dail in exchange for use of a building on the east side of Pine.² As the African-American community in Cambridge developed, the Bethel congregation financed the construction of a new sanctuary in 1870, which was replaced in 1903 with the large Gothic Revival sanctuary with its distinctive corner towers.

¹ Dorchester County Land Record, WJ 4/36, 23 December 1847, Dorchester County Courthouse.

² McElvey, Kay Najiyyah, "Early Black Dorchester, 1776-1870: A History of the Struggle of African-Americans in Dorchester County, Maryland, To Be Free To Make Their Own Choices." University of Maryland, 1991, p. 356.

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Name Bethel A. M. E. Church Continuation Sheet

Number 8 Page 1

Bethel A. M. E. Church 601 Pine Street Cambridge, Dorchester County, Maryland

Map 302, Parcel 2561

WJ 4/36

Thomas H. Handy and Sarah his wife

to

12.23.1847

Simon Brown, Spencer Young, Washington Jolly, Henry Washington, Joseph Brown, William Banks, William Hill, Chamberlain Bowley, Joseph Marine, Trustees

\$125 ...all and singular a certain lot or piece of land situate, lying and being in the Town of Cambridge, and on Pine Street, fronting on said Pine Street ninety eight feet, and running back two hundred feet to a line drawn straight from the corner of John Jackson's lot to Benjamin Woodard's lot and measures one hundred and eighty six feet in back end, and adjoins the lot of Thomas Plowman, let it be called whatever name it may be and the quantity of acres, more or less...in trust that they shall erect, or cause to be built thereon, a House of place of Worship for the use of the African Methodist Bethel Church in the United States of America, according to the rules and discipline of said Church...

1870

Construction of second sanctuary as inscribed on datestone

1903

Construction date of replacement Gothic Revival church, inscribed on datestone

9. Major Bibliographical References

Inventory No. D-591

Dorchester County Land Records, various volumes, Dorchester County Courthouse. Sanborn Insurance Maps, various issues, Library of Congress.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of surveyed property Acreage of historical setting Quadrangle name 28,300 square feet
Unknown acreage of lot
Cambridge, Maryland

Quadrangle scale: 1:24,000

Verbal boundary description and justification

The metes and bounds of this property are coincidental with the current boundary of the lot.

11. Form Prepared by

name/title	Paul B. Touart, Architectural Historian	N.	
organization	Chesapeake Country Heritage & Preservation	date	1.15.2011
street & number	P. O. Box 5	telephone	410-651-1094
city or town	Westover	state	Maryland 21871

The Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to:

Maryland Historical Trust DHCD/DHCP 100 Community Place Crownsville, MD 21032-2023 410-514-7600

Maryland Historical Trust Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Name Bethel A. M. E. Church

Continuation Sheet

Number 9 Page 1

D-591 Bethel A. M. E. Church Cambridge Founded c. 1847, 1903 Public Worship

The Bethel A.M.E. Church is clearly one of the most significant landmarks of African-American history and development in Dorchester County. Second to the Waugh Chapel Methodist congregation established in 1826, the Bethel A.M.E. membership was begun around 1847, which was when a fledgling group of members purchased property bordering Pine Street. The present building, the third to house this congregation, is a well detailed Gothic Revival brick edifice dominated by asymmetrical towers. Three pointed arch window and door openings, enhanced with corbelled brick heads, mark the first floor front. A marble datestone documents the construction of this structure in 1903. Since the Waugh congregation replaced its Victorian church in the late twentieth century, this is the oldest African-American church structure in the city of Cambridge, and its active congregation remains a vital part of the community.

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Name Bethel A. M. E. Church Continuation Sheet

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D-591, Bethel A.M.E. Church Cambridge, Maryland Quadrangle

Maryland Historical Trust Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Name Bethel A. M. E. Church Continuation Sheet

Number 9 Page 3

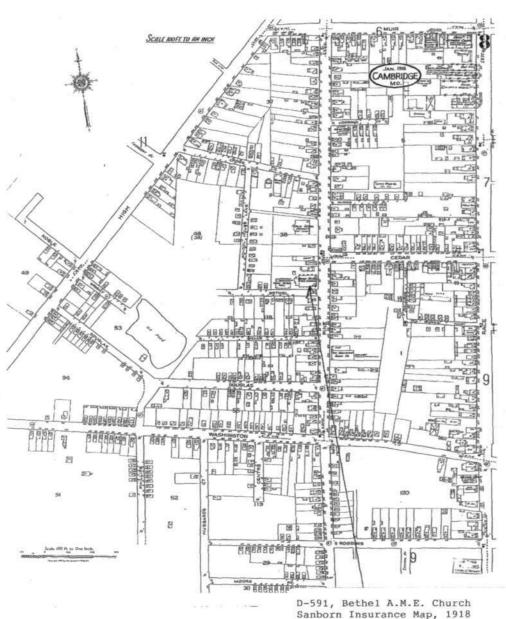


Maryland Historical Trust Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

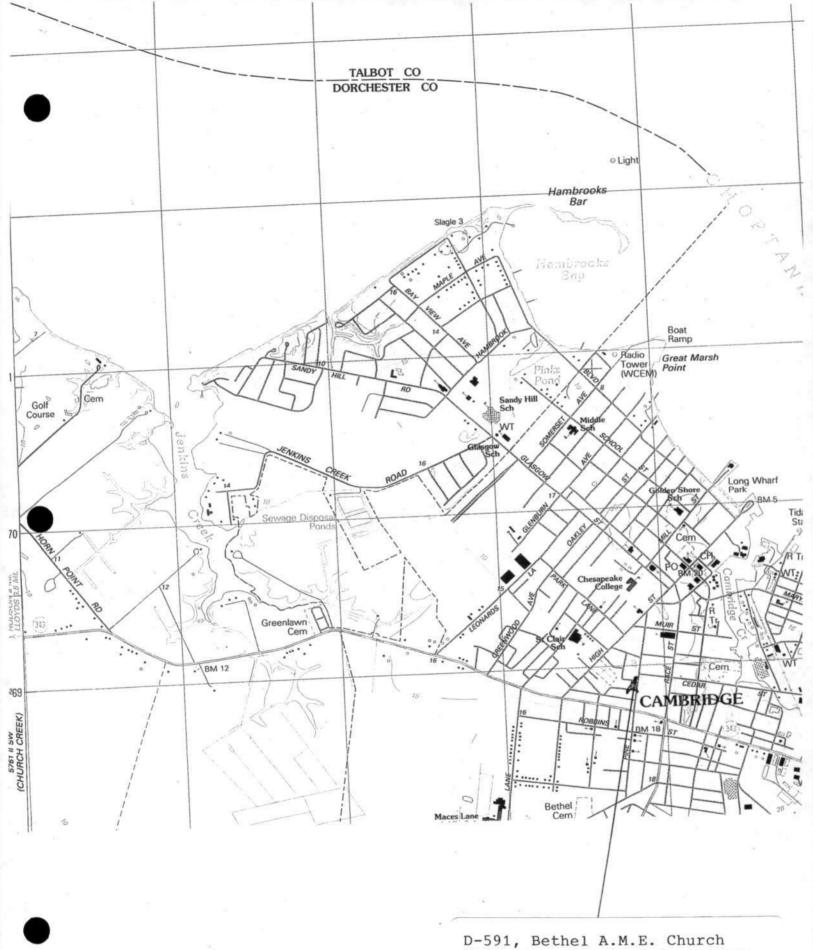
Inventory No. D-591

Bethel A. M. E. Church **Continuation Sheet**

Number 9 Page 4



Sanborn Insurance Map, 1918



D-591, Bethel A.M.E. Church Cambridge, Maryland Quadrangle



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BETHER A. M. E. CHURCH

CAMBRIDGE, DVRCHETTER

Co., MO.

2. 2010, PANC B. TONANT,

PHOTO.

NO. 1415T. TRUST

2 4 2

Dorchester - 591
Bethel AME Church
Cr. of Pine & Bethel Sts.
Cambridge, MD, 21613

1870, 1903

Access: Public

Bethel AME Church stands 8' from the west side of Pine Street (at the corner of Bethel). The building faces east. It houses the oldest AME congregation in Cambridge. It is an impressive late Victorian brick edifice with uneven towers at the front corners. The church was built in 1870 and rebuilt in 1903. Bethel (Cambridge) and Bethel (Easton) date from the same era. The African Methodist Episcopal Church reached the Eastern Shore of Maryland about 50 years after the Church was well established on the Western Shore of the state.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

NAME				
HISTORIC	Bethel AME Church	1		
AND/OR COMMON	45113 01101	-		
LOCATIO	N			
STREET & NUMBER	Cr. Pine & Bethel	Streets		
CITY, TOWN	Cambridge	_ VICINITY OF	congressional dist	RICT
STATE	Maryland		Cambridge	
CLASSIFIC	CATION			No.
CLI 10011 1	STATION .			
CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS		SENTUSE
DISTRICTBUILDING(S)	PUBLIC XPRIVATE	_XOCCUPIED	AGRICULTURE	MUSEUM
X STRUCTURE		_UNOCCUPIED	COMMERCIAL	PARK
✓ SITE	_BOTH PUBLIC ACQUISITION	WORK IN PROGRESS ACCESSIBLE	EDUCATIONAL ENTERTAINMENT	PRIVATE RESIDEN
_OBJECT	_IN PROCESS	XYES: RESTRICTED	GOVERNMENT	SCIENTIFIC
	TIN LUCESS	- TES RESIRICIED	-GOVENIAMENI	_SCIENTIFIC
	BEING CONCIDERED	VEC. LINDESTRICTED	INDUSTRIAL	TRANSPORTATION
Trus	DF PROPERTY tees. Bethel AME Ch	YES: UNRESTRICTED	INDUSTRIALMILITARY	TRANSPORTATION
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NAME Trus C/O STREET & NUMBER C: CITY, TOWN	OF PROPERTY tees, Bethel AME Ch Rev. H.L.Camper	_NO	_MILITARY Telephone #:	_OTHER:
NAME Trus C/O STREET & NUMBER C: CITY, TOWN	OF PROPERTY tees, Bethel AME Ch Rev. H.L.Camper r. Pine and Bethel	_NO aurch Streets _ VICINITY OF	Telephone #: STATE, : MD, 2	_OTHER:
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NAME Trus C/O STREET & NUMBER CITY. TOWN CITY. TOWN COURTHOUSE. REGISTRY OF DEED STREET & NUMBER CITY. TOWN	DF PROPERTY tees, Bethel AME Chamber Rev. H.L.Camper r. Pine and Bethel ambridge N OF LEGAL DESC sec Dorchester Combridge	NO streetsvicinity of RIPTION o.Court House	MILITARY Telephone #: STATE,: MD,2 Liber #: WJ 4 Folio #: 36	_OTHER: N/A zip code 1613
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__EXCELLENT

CONDITION

__DETERIORATED

_GOOD RUINS

_FAIR __UNEXPOSED **CHECK ONE**

__UNALTERED XALTERED

CHECK ONE

XORIGINAL SITE

__MOVED

DATE_1870-1903

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Bethel AME stands 8' from the west side of Pine Street (at the corner of Bethel). The building faces east. It is constructed of brick and is late Victorian. There are three entrances in the front facade. The central double-wooden doors have crosses carved into the exteriors (all the doors have the same motif). Above the central doors is a frontispiece stained-glass window 16'. There are 12' stained glass windows (lancet) above the other two entrances. There are towers at the northeast and southeast corners (front) of the building). These towers are of uneven height. The southeast tower is the taller. The same 12' stained-glass lancet windows (5 in number) are on the north side. There are five more of these windows in the south side. There are buttressess on both the north and south sides (4 each). The main body of the church is gabled (east-west) a brief false front extends 5' up the east gable between the towers. A concrete block addition (Hall & Sunday School) has been added at the southwest end of the building. The building rests on a brick foundation and has a composite shingle roof.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD
_PREHISTO
1400 140

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW

RIC __ARCHEULUGY-PREHISTORIC 1400-1499 _ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC _AGRICULTURE __1500-1599

__COMMUNITY PLANNING __CONSERVATION __ECONOMICS

__EDUCATION

_INVENTION

__ENGINEERING

_LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE X_RELIGION

_LAW

_SCIENCE

__1600-1699

_¥1900-

XARCHITECTURE

__COMMUNICATIONS

_LITERATURE __MILITARY

__SCULPTURE

__1700-1799

__ART

_MUSIC

X SOCIAL HUMANITARIAN __THEATER

_4800-1899 __COMMERCE

__EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT _INDUSTRY

__PHILOSOPHY

__POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

_TRANSPORTATION _OTHER (SPECIFY)

SPECIFIC DATES 1870-1903

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Bethel AME Church is the oldest African Methodist Episcopal Church in Cambridge. It is an impressive late Victorian brick edifice with uneven towers at the front corners. The church was built in 1870 and rebuilt in 1903. Bethel (Cambridge) & Bethel (Easton) date from the same era. The African Methodist Episcopal Church reached Eastern Shore of Maryland about 50 years after the Church was already established on the Western Shore. All AME Churches I have surveyed on the Eastern Shore date from after the Civil War.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET	T IF NECESSARY
10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA	
ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY	
VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION	
LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FO	OR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES
STATE	COUNTY
STATE	COUNTY
11 FORM PREPARED BY	
NAME / TITLE	
ORGANIZATION	DATE
STREET & NUMBER	TELEPHONE
CITY OR TOWN	STATE

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RETURN TO: Maryland Historical Trust
The Shaw House, 21 State Circle

Annapolis, Maryland 21401

(301) 267-1438



D-591

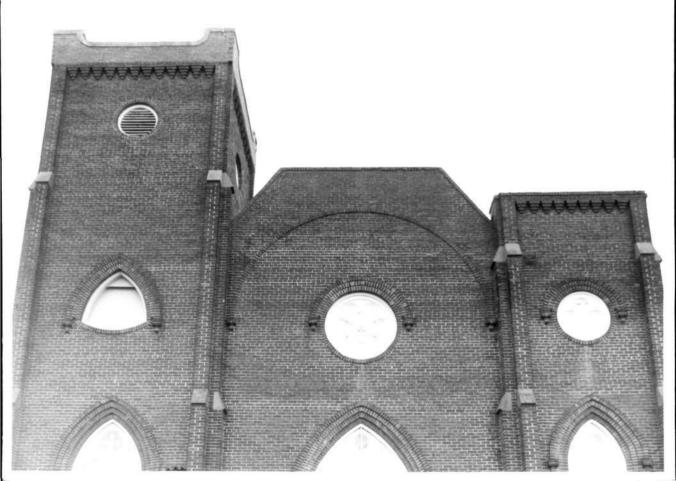
CAMBRIDGE





Bethel A.M.E. Church D-591 Cambridge, Dorchester County, MD Michael Hosford

Maryland Historical Trust, Annapolis Southeast elevation 2/81



Bethel A.M.E. Church
Cambridge, Dorchester County, MD
Michael Hosford

D-591

Maryland Historical Trust, Annapolis, MD East elevation - detail 2/81



D-591 Bethel A.M.E. Church Cambridge, Dorchester County, MD Micheal Hosford

Maryland Historical Trust, Annapolis, MD East elevation - detail 2/81